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FM AMEMBASSY TBILISI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2309
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TBILISI 001881

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/09/2019
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [DA](#) [RS](#) [GG](#)
SUBJECT: GEORGIA: ROUGH RECEPTION FOR DANISH FOREIGN
MINISTER IN ABKHAZIA

REF: A. TBILISI 1665
[1](#)B. TBILISI 1713

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires a.i. Kent Logsdon for reasons 1.4 (b)
and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: During an October 6 visit to Abkhazia, Danish Foreign Minister Per Stig Moeller met with de facto "foreign minister" Shamba and "president" Bagapsh. In meetings described by the Danish Honorary Consul, who accompanied the FM, as "disastrous," "poorly timed," and "awkward," Moeller received a barrage of criticisms and arguments from Shamba, and only a slightly more welcoming tone from Bagapsh. With Abkhaz "presidential" elections set for December 12, the Danes noted that the timing likely contributed to a combative reception for the most senior non-Russian visitor in a year. For now, the Abkhaz have clearly decided to maintain a tough line on status. The Danish representative in Tbilisi stressed that his Foreign Minister had been deeply disappointed, and left Georgia contrasting his reception in Abkhazia with a very different visit in July 2008. End Summary.

DISAPPOINTING AND AWKWARD

[1](#)2. (C) In a meeting with Poloffs, Danish Honorary Consul and former head of Amcham in Georgia Esben Emborg (please protect) provided an assessment of the October 6 travel to Abkhazia by Danish Foreign Minister Per Stig Moeller. As the only "official" Dane in Tbilisi, Emborg was responsible for planning the visit on his own, and accompanied the minister throughout his travels. Emborg made it clear that the visit was unsuccessful, with the minister angered by his treatment, the attitudes of Abkhaz officials, and the lack of any movement in a positive direction. Emborg noted that all EU foreign ministers desire to play roles in important areas of the world, and Moeller's decision to take this trip stemmed from his to make Abkhazia his area for his attention. The trip was coordinated in advance with the Georgian government which, as in the case with Turkish Deputy Foreign Minister Unal Cevikoz in September, provided transportation to the Abkhaz administrative boundary. Emborg communicated with Abkhaz de facto officials about the trip through the Danish Refugee Council and used UNHCR vehicles for travel inside Abkhazia. He stated that this requirement for a cut-out instead of direct communications was "disastrous," and likely further angered the Abkhaz interlocutors, with whom they planned to meet.

[1](#)3. (C) In a sign of things to come, when the Danish delegation arrived at the de facto Abkhaz "ministry of foreign affairs" for the meeting with Shamba, no one came to greet them at the door, nor did they know where to go. They had to ask a cleaning lady the way to Shamba's office. With this inauspicious start, the subsequent meeting, labeled by Emborg as disastrous, awkward, and bad, provided Shamba an opportunity to condemn EU policy, which he stated was only

pushing Abkhazia further towards Russia, and to argue with the Danish minister about the lack of recognition. While the subsequent meeting with Bagapsh proceeded with slightly less animosity, it also did not result in anything substantive, and Bagapsh stressed the principles on which the Abkhaz base their "independence." Emborg said the two had clearly coordinated their messages to present the Danes with a united front. Although Emborg had proposed a lunch afterwards, Shamba pretended he knew nothing about it - so after the Bagapsh meeting, the Danes unceremoniously left.

GEORGIANS HAPPY
QGEORGIANS HAPPY

¶4. (C) Following the meetings, Moeller returned to Tbilisi and had dinner at the Honorary Consul's house, where the minister expressed his deep disappointment with the trip. Emborg stated that the Minister compared this trip with his prior visit to Abkhazia in 2008, when he was treated much better. Additionally, Emborg stressed, that with the upcoming Abkhaz elections, the Abkhaz leaders wanted to appear tough on the international community. These factors, coupled with the need for the Danish government to organize the visit through an NGO, all played a role outcome of the visit, according to Emborg. In his subsequent meetings with Georgian officials, Moeller was told that they were not surprised with the reception, and did little to hide their good feelings about this result. Georgian press focused on Shamba's comments about the incomprehension in Abkhazia of the EU's "unrealistic approach" that would not contribute to the resolution of the conflict.

ABKHAZ "PRESIDENTIAL" ELECTIONS

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¶5. (U) According to the website of the "president" of Abkhazia, the Abkhaz "parliament" has set the date for "presidential" elections in Abkhazia for December 12 (ref A).

As reported in Georgian press, the current political opposition is accusing Bagapsh of trying to rig the elections, claiming that Bagapsh is using administrative resources to pressure ethnic Georgians in Gali to support him, as they did in the previous "election." Reportedly, Bagapsh is taking more forcible measures as well, including arresting Valmer Butba, a relative and close associate of likely "presidential" candidate Beslan Butba. Another possible candidate is Stanislav Lakoba, who resigned as national security "secretary" in August (ref B). Georgian media has speculated that Moscow will again support former "vice-president" Raul Khajimba in the elections.

¶6. (C) Comment: The Danish Foreign Minister left Georgia quite disappointed. The Abkhaz defacto officials ensured that they were on message about their distrust of the majority of the world, and their expectation of success sooner or later, delivering their message to the most senior western official to visit Abkhazia since the war. Unable to cite even one positive aspect of his meetings with Abkhaz officials, the Danish foreign minister, whom Emborg stated was strongly committed to develop solutions for the region, was highly disappointed in his inability to move the conversation forward. It appears that at least until after the elections, Abkhaz officials will remain intransigent in their dealings with outside officials, particularly from the west. End Comment.

LOGSDON